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Abstract

This article examines the ethnic identity adaptations of recently-arrived immigrant children from China, Haiti, and Mexico. Overall, three main types of ethnic identity categories emerged: country of origin (e.g., Chinese), hyphenated (e.g., Chinese American), and pan-ethnic (e.g., Asian or Asian American). These three ethnic identities were examined to assess their relationships with various social and structural variables. While most of the participants retained their country-of-origin label throughout the five-year longitudinal study, a significant number of them showed divergent paths of ethnic identity shifts and formations. As a whole, only gender, annual household income, and parental educational level were significantly associated with different ethnic identity changes. Analyzed separately by national groups, Chinese participants' ethnic identity adaptations were influenced by parental educational level, and Haitian and Mexican participants by gender. Potential explanations for the various ethnic adaptations are examined and limitations of the study discussed.

Keywords: immigration; race; ethnic identity; youth; acculturation; gender

Introduction

'Identificational assimilation' is defined as possessing a self-image as a plain, unhyphenated 'American,' and is considered by many the end point of successful assimilation into American society (Gordon 1964). Scholars argue that for children and grandchildren of European immigrants, acculturation into and identification with the dominant American society becomes a viable option, whereas their 'ethnic,' country-of-origin identity may become a discretionary enactment of 'symbolic' significance (Gans 1979), private and voluntary, eventually fading into the 'twilight of ethnicity' (Alba, 1985). For these descendents of immigrants from Europe, Waters (1990) contends that ethnicity[1] may not be something that impacts their lives, unless they want it to.

The immigrant population since the early 20th century has shifted dramatically from predominantly European backgrounds to that of Asian, Latin American, African, and the Caribbean. From 1900 to 1920, immigrants from Europe made up almost 86 per cent of those entering the US, but from 1980 to 2000, the percentage dropped to 13 per cent (U.S. Bureau of Census 2000). The great majority of the current wave of immigrants is from non-European countries like Mexico, China, India, and the Dominican Republic.

In light of these vastly different demographic patterns of post-1965 immigration, it is important to consider the following questions: How does 'identificational assimilation' operate for immigrants from non-European countries? Is ethnicity similarly optional for the children and grandchildren of immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean? And how do the ethnic identities of non-European immigrants influence their lives, whether they *want* them to or *not*?

The present study examines a small piece of this puzzle—the adoption of various ethnic identities among recently-arrived immigrant children from China,

Haiti, and Mexico. While there has been some interest in the identity development of immigrants in the past (e.g., Alba 1990; Gordon 1961), relatively few studies have investigated the ethnic identity development of non-European immigrant *children*. Studies on the types of ethnic and racial labels adopted by immigrant children from China, Haiti, and Mexico, representing some of the largest post-1965 immigrant groups (U.S. Bureau of Census 2000), will serve as an important means of understanding how non-European immigrant children are Americanized.

In addition, I will investigate how these immigrant children's understanding of themselves, through the lens of their adopted racial/ethnic identities, relates to various social, structural, and affective variables. Specifically, my study asks: How do recently-arrived immigrant children from China, Haiti, and Mexico identify themselves racially and ethnically; and how do these children's different racial/ethnic self-identification differ across gender, age, length of residency in the US, socio-economic status, and attitudes and perceptions related to their experiences living in the US?

Background Context

Counter-assimilationist literature argues that non-European immigrants often experience a significantly different process of Americanization than do immigrants of European origin (Espiritu 1997; Omi and Winant 1994). For many white Americans, scholars suggest, there is often no longer a need to think of themselves primarily in ethnic terms (Alba 1990; Tuan 1998). Their ethnicity often trails behind their familial or professional roles, so that making ethnicity a prominent element of one's identity requires a *conscious* choice (Waters 1990). In contrast, for minorities and immigrants of colour, ethnic and racial identities are constantly imposed on them

by virtue of their physical appearance, so that they are often seen as less than full-fledged, unhyphenated Americans (Wu 2002).

In a similar vein, social and historical theorists posit that through a historical pattern of political and social exclusion, oppression, and marginalization, Americans of European ancestry have created a rigid racial hierarchy where the very definition of 'American' requires that one be of European descent or white (Tuan 1998). Consequently, even though non-white racial groups continue to press for inclusion as authentic Americans, the reality is that they are still classified and perceived as the 'other,' unable to follow the assimilation path of their white European neighbours (Takaki 1998).

The literature also suggests that the construction of racial/ethnic self-identity is more complicated for the children of immigrants (Phinney 1992). Unlike their parents who come to the new world with a clearer and more defined sense of their ethnic identity, the immigrant children are caught in two (or more) cultural worlds in which they must navigate through various national, ethnic, and racial allegiances (Suárez-Orozco 2004). For these newly-immigrated children, the process of becoming American entails a struggle to reconcile their sense of self with those of their parents' country-of-origin and a myriad of racial and ethnic categories, each with its particular associations and connotations (Waters 1997).

Conceptual Framework

Ethnic Labels in Construction of Self-Identity

Ethnic self-identification has been studied in various psychological and sociological research as a way of examining identity perception and construction (e.g., Buriel 1987; Phinney 1990; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Some researchers on immigrant identity formation argue that the labels immigrants and other racial minorities 'choose' are, in some ways, imposed on them by others (Omi and Winant 1994; Suárez-Orozco 2000). Through 'ethnic identification,' Suárez-Orozco (2004) posit that immigrants undergo a social process in which one's ethnic membership is *ascribed* to the individual based on a set of phenotypic and cultural traits. This imposed ethnic group membership comes mainly from two outside sources: the co-ethnics ('You are a member of *our* group.') and the majority group ('You are a member of *that* group.'). Sociologists and anthropologists argue that it is through the influences of those within and outside of their ethnic/racial community that individuals come to form their ethnic/racial self-identity (DeVos 1980; Suárez-Orozco 2000).

Within the field of developmental psychology, ethnic identity is viewed as a myriad of internal processes by which the individual shifts from 'racial unawareness,' to 'exploration,' to a stage of *achieved* sense of identity where he/she claims a sense of ethnic/racial membership ('I am a member of *this* group.') (Marcia 1966). Others have argued that a person may advance from one stage to the next and then revisit a previous stage, each time from a different perspective (Parham 1989).

Similarly, scholars have also argued that ethnic self labels are not consistent indicators of group membership; rather, they vary over time and contexts (Suárez-Orozco 2004), and carry different connotations among individuals and groups (Phinney 1996). Researchers also note that most, if not all, adolescents change

various aspects of their identities over their teenage years (Erikson 1968). There is little evidence to suggest that *ethnic* identity would be exempt from these changes (Garcia and Lega 1979; Rogler et al. 1980).

In sum, ethnic identity is a complex, multidimensional construct that differs among various ethnic members, and is subject to social, cultural, and developmental changes (Buriel 1987; Phinney 1996; Takaki 1998). But despite its seemingly amorphous nature, ethnic identity is a real aspect of one's life in the US and elsewhere, often colouring and shading how one interprets his/her lived experiences.

Major Factors Related to Ethnic and Racial Labels

Socially-categorized markers such as ethnicity, gender, and age, along with social-cultural factors such as social economic status, and levels of discrimination (among others) have been discussed in past literature as possible vectors in which ethnic/racial boundaries and self-awareness have been understood and formulated.

Gender. The literature is mixed on the role of gender in ethnic/racial labeling. While some studies have noted that females are more likely than males to retain their country-of-origin identities and ancestral culture (Ullah 1985), other studies have found males to show greater preference for their ethnic identities (Smith 2002). Rumbaut (1996) found that males were more likely to identify in unhyphenated terms, using either "American" or country-of-origin labels, whereas females were more likely to adopt a bi-national, hyphenated identity. Waters (1999), on the other hand, found that gender did not determine the identity chosen by her immigrant participants, but it did shape the meanings attached to their chosen identities.

Age. The literature on ethnic identity formation in minority youth suggests a progression over time from an unexamined or diffuse stage to a more concrete, achieved ethnic identity (Phinney 1990). For immigrant children, a sense of ethnic

identity was found to be weaker among those who arrived at a younger age than those who had immigrated at a later stage in life (Garcia 1979). Many immigrant children in late adolescence were also more likely to adopt a pan-ethnic identity than their younger peers in early adolescence (Portes 2001).

Length of Residency in the US. Ethnic identity was found to be weaker among those who had immigrated at a younger age and had lived longer in the new country (Rogler 1980). However, most of the studies that have examined the relationship between length of stay in a host country with ethnic identity have either compared one generation to another or between younger and older immigrants (Ting-Toomey 1981).

Socio-Economic Status. Past studies examining the relationship between socio-economic status and ethnic identity is inconsistent. While some literature on European immigrant groups suggest that ethnic identity is less likely to be maintained among those with higher-SES than among lower-SES ethnic groups (e.g., Ullah 1985), studies on Latino and Afro-Caribbean youth have shown that immigrant children who identify themselves with pan-ethnic labels tend to come from less-advantaged SES backgrounds, whereas those who associated themselves with *American* (hyphenated and plain) or their parents' national identity were more likely to come from families of higher SES (Rumbaut 1996). On the other hand, Phinney et al. (2001) found that the relationship between SES and ethnic identity was present in one immigrant group and absent in another.

Discrimination. Rumbaut (1996) found that immigrant adolescents who had experienced discrimination and those who expect that people will discriminate against them were less likely to identify as *American*, and more likely to maintain a country-of-origin identity. In addition, past studies have found that immigrant children who had racialized themselves as *black, Hispanic,* or *Asian* were more

likely to associate such identities with higher levels of discrimination than their peers who labeled themselves with other ethnic categories (Portes 2001).

Methodology

Dataset

Originated in 1997, the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation (LISA) study is a five-year investigation of adaptation of recently-arrived immigrant students from China, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Central America. The sample consists of a total of 408 (aged 9 to 15 at the time of recruitment) immigrant students enrolled in over 50 schools in the Boston and San Francisco areas. Five years later, the sample size was reduced to 308, with an attrition rate of just below 25 per cent.

Analytic Sample

My sample of 192 immigrant students from China, Haiti, and Mexico is a subset of the 308 students who remained in the study during the entire duration of the five-year study. There are 72 Chinese students, 50 Haitian, and 70 Mexican. As a whole, there were slightly more female participants than male, 54 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively. The mean age for the group (in Year 5) is 15.5, with a range of 12 to 19 years of age. The Chinese students were the oldest of the three with a mean age of 16.4, and the Mexican students were the youngest at 14.5. The Haitian students were in the middle, with a mean age of 15.6

[Table 1]

Instrument

The interviews were conducted at the students' schools during each of the five years of the study, using the language of the students' choice. The format of the interview questions ranged from simple multiple-choice questions to more in-depth open-ended

questions. The questions used in my study, however, were simple multiple-choice items (Appendix A).[2]

Measures

Gender. As a categorical variable, gender was categorized as '0' = male and '1' = female.

Age. As a continuous variable, student's age was measured in number of years.

Length of Residency in the US. As a continuous variable, the length of stay in the US at the time of recruitment was measured in number of months. With the mean of 22.9 months, the range varied from 1 to 77 months.[3]

Parental Education Level. As a categorical variable, parental education level was constructed in a three-point index of low (less than middle school), medium (middle school to high school), and high (high school graduation and beyond) levels.

Annual Household Income. As a categorical variable, annual household income was constructed in a three-point index of low (less than $20,000), medium (between $20,000 and $40,000), and high (over $40,000).

Attitude and Perception. To investigation the role student's attitude and perception of their experiences living in the US had in their selection of ethnic identities, the study asked the students four questions with the following options:

- [How] do you feel?
    1. Completely [from country of origin]
    2. Mostly [from country of origin] but a little American
    3. Somewhat American and somewhat [from country of origin]
    4. Mostly American and a little [from country of origin]
    5. Completely American

- Overall feelings towards US:
    1. Negative
    2. Mixed
    3. Neutral/Descriptive
    4. Positive

- Which of these countries feels more like home to you?
    1. Country of origin
    2. United States
    3. Both

- Do you feel that you have ever been discriminated against in the U.S.?
    0. No
    1. Yes

Findings

Ethnic/Racial Self Identities

Of the various options given to the students, three ethnic/racial identities emerged as the most popular choices: country-of-origin, hyphenated American, and pan-ethnic. These choices were selected by 98 per cent of the students in Year 1 and 99 per cent in Year 5.

[Figure 1]

By far, the most popular choice was the country-of-origin selection. This category characterized those students who selected their country-of-origin identity (e.g., Chinese, Haitian, and Mexican) as their preferred self label. Making up 85 per cent

of the students we interviewed in Year 1, the percentage declined to 68 per cent in Year 5.

The second most popular choice was that of the pan-ethnic label. These students identified themselves with racial labels such as Asian (or Asian American), Latino (or Hispanic), or black (or black/African American). This category represented the category with the biggest increase over the five year period, making up 7 per cent in Year 1 and 18 per cent in Year 5.

The last significant choice was that of the hyphenated identity, selected by 6 per cent of the students in Year 1 and 12 per cent in Year 5. These students identified themselves as Chinese American, Haitian American, or Mexican American.

For the purposes of this study, I examined the *patterns* of these changes and how they are related to various socio-cultural variables. The results are as follows.

[Figure 2]

After examining all the ways in which the participants changed or remained stable in their labels from Year 1 to Year 5, three main patterns of change/stability emerged: 1) country-of-origin to country-of-origin (e.g., Chinese to Chinese); 2) pan-ethnic identity shift (e.g., Chinese to Asian/Asian American); and 3) hyphenated identity shift (e.g., Chinese to Chinese American). These three patterns were chosen by just over 81 per cent (n=156) of all the participants. Subsequent sections will focus on these groups of students.

Patterns of Ethnic/Racial Self Identities by Nationalities

Around 74 per cent of the students maintained their country-of-origin label from Year 1 and to Year 5. This figure was remarkably consistent in the three immigrant

groups, from 73 per cent with the Chinese to 74 per cent for the Haitian and Mexican students.

[Figure 3]

Among the students who did change their self identity labels over the five year period, 15 per cent of the students opted to go from their country-of-origin identity to that of a pan-ethnic label. The group representing the largest proportional number of students in this category was the Mexican cohort with 26 per cent of the students calling themselves 'Mexican' in Year 1 and 'Latino/Hispanic' by Year 5. In contrast, none of the Haitian students called themselves 'Haitian' in Year 1 and 'black/black American' in Year 5. The Chinese students fell somewhere between these two groups with 15 per cent.

Just over 11 per cent of the students in the study chose to shift their identities from country-of-origin to hyphenated identity. The largest group to do so was the Haitian cohort with 26 per cent of them preferring to be called 'Haitian' in Year 1 and 'Haitian-American' in Year 5. In contrast, none of the Mexican students belonged to this category. Again, the Chinese students fell in the middle with 12 per cent.

Variables Related to Changes in Ethnic/Racial Identities

I also examined the relationship between some key variable from past studies with the changes or stability in ethnic identity labels. The variables examined in this study are gender, age, length of residency in the US, socio-economic status, and perceptions and attitudes towards their residency in the US.

[Table 2]

Gender. Boys and girls in the study differed greatly in the patterns of changes in their ethnic labels. On average, girls were more likely to either retain

their country-of-origin label or move to the pan-ethnic category. Boys, on the other hand, were much more likely to embrace the hyphenated identity.

Stratified by nationality (Appendix B), Chinese and Haitian girls were more likely to retain their country-of-origin identity. This was not true of the Mexican group, where the boys were more likely to maintain their country-of-origin identity. As far as moving to the pan-ethnic category, only the Mexican group showed much difference, where the girls were more willing to adopt a pan-ethnic label.

Overall, boys were more likely to shift to a hyphenated label. This was mostly due to the Haitian group in which boys labeling themselves *Haitian American* outnumbered their female counterparts 10 to 1. The Chinese group did not differ much by gender in this category.

Age. The results did not show any significant association between age and patterns of changes in ethnic self labels. In other words, older students did not differ much in their pattern of ethnic/racial change from their younger counterparts. This was consistent across all three ethnic groups.

Length of Residency in the US. On average, students with hyphenated ethnic labels had the longest US residence with almost 6.5 years, and those with country-of-origin and pan-ethnic labels had lengths of residence in the US of 5.9 and 5.4 years, respectively. Analysis by immigrant groups showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean number of years between hyphenated and pan-ethnic ethnic labels among the Chinese students, such that those who labeled themselves as *Chinese American* had resided in the United States longer (roughly 16 months) than those who called themselves *Asian* or *Asian American.*

Socio-Economic Status. Socio-economic status (SES) was examined using parental education level and annual household income. Overall, there was no statistically significant relationship between SES and ethnic labels among the

participants. However, the data did reveal that participants with pan-ethnic labels were overly represented in the low education level and underrepresented in the high education level. Stratified by ethnic groups, this pattern held up only for the Chinese students.

As for the effect of household income, the results showed that students did not differ significantly in their patterns of ethnic label choices by their yearly household income. There was, however, a noticeable trend in that those in the high income category tended to either choose country-of-origin or pan-ethnic labels, while avoiding the hyphenated label. Perhaps due to small sample size, this difference was not found to be statistically meaningful.

Student Perceptions. As a whole, students' feelings of Americanness, attitudes toward the United States, sense of belonging, and perception of discrimination were not found to be statistically associated with their ethnic identity selections. There was, however, a marked pattern in which the hyphenated group tended to feel most American, showed most positive attitudes towards their view of the US, and reported least experiences with discrimination. The participants in this category were also most likely to state that they felt 'at home' in both their countries of origin and the US. These differences, however, were not statistically significant.

Analyzed separately by nationality, Chinese students who retained their country-of-origin label were least likely to say that they felt at home in *both* China and the US. In addition, of all the ethnic self identification categories by the three national groups, only the students in the Mexican pan-ethnic group had a higher percentage of students who claimed that they had experienced discrimination while living in the US. Perhaps again due to small sample size, this difference was also not large enough to be statistically meaningful.

Determinates of Ethnic/Racial Identities

Using the mentioned correlates related to ethnic identities, a multinomial logistical regression was used to identify the factors most likely to predict ethnic identity changes while holding various predictors constant. The country-of-origin category was chosen as the reference category as it was the most popular and equally-distributed choice across the three national groups.

Table 6 shows the results of the relationship between the various correlates and patterns of ethnic identity labeling. As a whole, gender, parental education level, and annual household income emerged as significant predictors. Although the results differed for each of the three ethnic groups, as aggregate, these three variables accounted for approximately 13 per cent of the variance in patterns of ethnic labeling.

[Table 6]

In comparison to the country-of-origin group, those who labeled themselves with a hyphenated label in Year 5 were more likely to be male and come from poorer households. Specifically, immigrant girls were 69 per cent less likely to adopt a hyphenated identity than their male counterparts. As for household income, each unit decrease in income level (e.g., 'high' to 'medium,' or 'medium' to 'low') was associated with a 1.5 times greater likelihood of students shifting to a hyphenated label.

For students shifting to pan-ethnic labels, parental education level was the only significant predictor, such that students with parents with higher levels of education were less likely to adopt a pan-ethnic label. Specifically, each additional increase in educational levels was associated with about half the likelihood (.55) of shifting to a pan-ethnic label, as compared to retaining their country-of-origin identity.

Tables 7 to 9 show the statistically significant predictors of ethnic labeling for each of the three national groups.

[Tables 7]

For the Chinese group, parental educational level was the only significant predictor, accounting for approximately 11 per cent of the outcome in ethnic label selection. In particular, students with parents with a high (high school graduation and beyond) educational level were 62 per cent less likely to adopt a pan-ethnic label (as opposed to maintaining their country-of-origin identity) than their peers reared by parents with a medium (middle school to some high school) educational level.

[Table 8]

For the Haitian group, gender was found to be a significant predictor, accounting for 38 per cent of the variance in ethnic identity selections. Specifically, the data showed that Haitian girls were much less likely to adopt the Haitian American label compared to Haitian boys. The results were such that for every one Haitian female who shifted from *Haitian* in Year 1 to *Haitian American* in Year 5, there were roughly 20 Haitian males who fit that description.

[Table 9]

Finally, for the Mexican group, gender also came out as significant predictor, accounting for roughly 9 per cent of the variance in ethnic identity selections. Specifically, by Year 5, Mexican girls were 3.2 times more likely to shift to a pan-ethnic label than their male counterparts.

Summary and Discussion

The focus of this study was to examine the ethnic identity adaptations of recently-arrived immigrant children from China, Haiti, and Mexico. While issues of

variability in types of racial and ethnic identities among immigrant children and their relationship to context have been considered, there is to date no systematic study examining psycho-cultural, longitudinal *changes* over time as different groups of recently-immigrated youth adapt to the American society. To address these gaps in the literature, I examined how recently-arrived Chinese, Haitian, and Mexican immigrant children ethnically self-identify and how their perceived understanding of themselves were related to various social, cultural, and psychological factors over a five-year span. I discuss the findings in the following section.

Overall, three main types of ethnic identity categories emerged: country-of-origin, hyphenated, and pan-ethnic. While most of the students retained their country-of-origin label, a fair portion of the students chose to shift their ethnic self identity.

Comparison of the three national groups showed that the ways in which immigrant children acculturate or see themselves ethnically and racially do not follow a uniform pattern. While most of the students in all three ethnic groups—Chinese, Haitian, and Mexican, retained their country-of-origin label, the patterns of changes in ethnic identity labels differed dramatically. Among the students who changed their self labels, none of the Haitian students shifted to the pan-ethnic labels of black or African American, preferring rather the hyphenated identity of Haitian American; whereas for the Mexican students, none chose the hyphenated label of Mexican American, opting exclusively for the pan-ethnic label of Latina/o or Hispanic. For the Chinese students, there was no clear preference for either the hyphenated or pan-ethnic labels. Possible explanations for these divergent patterns of ethnic selections by national groups will be discussed later in this paper.

Contrary to past studies, age was not a significant predictor of ethnic identity selection. And although the lengthy of residency was shown to be statistically

different across the three ethnic identity choices, it was not found to be a significant predictor in further analysis.

Gender, on the other hand, was found to be a significant predictor. As a whole, immigrant girls were far less likely to adopt a hyphenated identity than their male counterparts. Stratified by ethnic groups, gender was a meaningful predictor in for Haitian and Mexican students. Specifically, the data showed that Haitian boys were 20 times more likely to adopt the Haitian American label compared to Haitian girls. For the Mexican group, girls were more than three times more likely to shift to a pan-ethnic label than their male counterparts.

This finding is consistent with past literature showing that gender is a strong and consistent element in the ethnic identification processes of immigrants and minorities in the US. Indeed, some scholars even contend that ethnic self-identification is itself a gendered process, shaping both the choices immigrant and minority youth make as well as the meanings they attach to them (Rumbaut 1994; Waters 1996). Moreover, scholars such Smith (2002) and Lopez (2002) argue that in the US, immigrants and minorities of colour are treated as both racialized *and* gendered bodies, not as 'genderless' ethnics or 'raceless' genders, and are often forced to negotiate very different 'rules of engagement' with various American institutions. Echoing the findings of such studies, the present investigation underscores the importance of how gender and ethnicity are intricately linked to produce divergent outcomes for the members of the immigrant and minority community.

As a whole, parental education levels and annual household income were found to be significant predictors for patterns of ethnic identity selections. Results were such that participants with parents with higher levels of education were less likely to adopt pan-ethnic labels. As for household income, increase in household

income was associated with a greater likelihood of a participant shifting to a hyphenated label.

Disaggregated by nationalities, family background was found to be a significant predictor only for the Chinese participants. Specifically, Chinese students with parents with more years of formal education were less likely to adopt a pan-ethnic label than their peers reared by parents with fewer years of schooling.

Such a result is consistent with past studies suggesting that immigrant children who come from with higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to associate themselves more with their parents' country-of-origin backgrounds or an American (both plain and unhyphenated) identity (Portes 2001; Rumbaut 1996). Some scholars theorize that such avoidance of the pan-ethnic identities by a higher SES cohort may originate from the fact that these individuals may be better incorporated within the white mainstream, often residing in neighborhoods or attending schools with less concentration of their fellow minority or pan-ethnic members, an environment in which pan-ethnic solidarity may seem less salient (Eschbach 1998).

On the other hand, past research also found no relationship between ethnic identity and social class (Phinney 1989; 1990), or that such a relationship may exist in one group and not in another (Phinney 2001). And indeed, we see from this study that SES only played a significant role for the Chinese students, showing little or no effect for the Haitian and Mexican participants.

In contrast to past studies, perceptions and attitudes the immigrant students had toward their experiences in the US had little or no relationship with their ethnic identity choices. At the aggregate level, those students who maintained their country-of-origin labels differed little from their peers who shifted to hyphenated or pan-ethnic labels in terms of: how 'American' they felt, their views toward America,

their levels of experiences with discrimination, and whether they felt more at home in their countries of origin or the US.

Disaggregated by nationalities, however, the Chinese and Haitian hyphenated groups showed a slightly higher level of 'Americanness' than their peers who had no changes in their ethnic self labels. For the Mexican group, there was almost no difference between the country-of-origin and pan-ethnic groups in their feelings of 'Americanness.' Overall, Chinese hyphenated students had the highest level of feelings of 'Americanness' with 2.14 (out of 3.0), and Mexican pan-ethnic group had the lowest at 1.36. The differences in this stratified-by-ethnic-group analysis, however, did not reach statistically significant levels.

For the discrimination question ('Did you ever feel discriminated against in the US?'), Mexican students had the highest percentage of respondent who answered 'Yes,' at 43 per cent. The Chinese and Haitian students were at 37 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively. In addition, Mexican students who chose the pan-ethnic identity of Latino or Hispanic were the only ones who had a higher percentage saying that they have been discriminated against in the past. Although statistically insignificant, such relationship between levels of discrimination and gravitation to either the country-of-origin or the pan-ethnic label by the Mexican community has been supported in past literature.

In their book, Legacies: The Story of the Second Generation, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) write about the adherence to the country-of-origin or pan-ethnic identity as a form of resistance to the hostile reception in the host country among the members of the Mexican American community. Described as a 'reactive identity,' these scholars write about 'American-made' identities like the *Nation of Aztlan* or *La Raza* by the descendents of Mexican immigrants as a form of solidarity and

defensive mechanism to counter negative depictions of them by the popular mainstream.

Moreover, in light of the passing of the anti-immigration act (Proposition 187)[4] in California (where all of the Mexican participants were recruited from), the avoidance of the term *Mexican American* by the Mexican students in the study becomes more intriguing. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) posit that the whole Proposition 187 debate may have induced a reactive identity formation among Mexican residents in California such that there was a strong movement away from mainstream identities such as *American* or *Mexican American*, and a shift towards a more immigrant or pan-ethnic minority-group identities. This may help make sense of the fact that of the 53 Mexican students in the study, none of them chose the hyphenated identity of *Mexican American* in the final year of the study.

What about the Haitian students? Why did none of these students in the study choose the ethnic label 'black' in Year 5? Why Americanize as *Haitian American* but not as *black, black American,* or *African American*? Could it that, as consistent with past studies on black immigrants, this shift to a hyphenated identity is an attempt (be it conscious or otherwise) by the Haitian students to 'Americanize' while at the same time distancing themselves from the black American population whom they see negatively portrayed by the wider society?

Interestingly, among the students who felt that they had experienced discrimination during their residence in the US, the study asked for the main reasons they felt they were discriminated against. Was it because of their nationality, race, gender, or poor English? For the Chinese and Mexican students, there was little association in how they identified themselves ethnically/racially and the main reason(s) they thought they were discriminated against. For the Haitian students, however, the ones who shifted to the *Haitian American* label were much more likely

to say that they were discriminated against because of their 'blackness' than because of their country-of-origin identity. Perhaps, this negative experience with their "blackness" may explain the fact that, in Year 5, all of the Haitian students opted to either retain their country-of-origin identity or shift to a hyphenated ethnic label, with none labeling themselves *black* or *African American.*

As for the Chinese students, there was no lopsided preference for either *Asian/Asian American* or *Chinese American* label. Among the ones who shifted their ethnic self labels, why was there no distinct pattern of favouring one ethnic label over another, as we have seen with Haitian and Mexican participants? Is it that neither label carries the stigma of underachievement?

Kibria (2002) argues that compared to Latino or black immigrants, Asian immigrants are more successfully able to persuade others that they are Chinese, Indian, or Korean; and that the switch between the labels *Chinese* and *Asian*, for example, may not have as much political and social 'baggage' attached to it as that of someone going from *Jamaican* to *black* or *Mexican* to *Hispanic*. Further study is needed to explore the various socio-cultural factors that may help explain more of the changes in ethnic label for immigrant children from China (and other Asian countries), but this multidirectional shifts in ethnic identity among Asian-origin immigrant children was also seen among Vietnamese students in San Diego (Zhou 2001).

In summary, the present study gives additional evidence that non-European immigrants and their children have divergent ways of acculturating into the American landscape. These different paths of assimilation were seen in the ways in which recently-immigrated youth from China, Haiti, and Mexico ethnically self identified in the early years of their immigration. Perhaps future studies could build on the findings of the present investigation to shed more light on how the current

wave of immigrants and their children are being incorporated into the American society, not only in comparison to European immigrants of the past but also in relation to other post-1965 influx of non-European immigrants from such places as Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Limitations

Although enlightening in the divergent patterns in which these three immigrant groups from China, Haiti, and Mexico self identified ethnically/racially over the five years of the study, the investigation was restrained by some limitations. Firstly, due to the nature of conducting longitudinal studies (e.g., cost, attrition), the sample size was somewhat limited. Even though there were 192 students in my dataset, after stratifying them by various categories such as national origins and gender, the numbers became somewhat smaller than ideal to be used with certain levels of statistical confidence. Consequently, many of the analysis at the national level were found to lack statistical significance.

Secondly, the participants in my study were gathered from two major metropolitan areas, San Francisco and Boston. Since the Mexican students were from San Francisco, and Chinese and Haitian students were from Boston, it must be acknowledged that there may be regional effects that I was not able to investigate. Clearly, these two cities have their own cultural, political, and social climate which would have undoubtedly played a role in how the participants viewed themselves from a racial/ethnic standpoint. Unfortunately, such analysis of the regional effects was beyond the scope of my investigation.

Thirdly, the study took place during a five-year period, from 1997 to 2002. Given the fast-changing social, cultural, and political climate, how likely would the results be replicated in the current environment? In light of the election of the US's

first black President in 2008, would the comparably current cohort of Haitian immigrant students be as avoidant of the *black* label as the participants in the LISA study? And with the ever shifting debate on the issue of immigration and the rapidly-changing demographic landscape in various parts of the US, how would the more recent immigrant children from Mexico and China differ in their patterns of ethnic identity formations? Such line of inquiry would be useful in future investigations.

Finally, despite the fact that the numerous open-ended questions delved into many of the social, psychological, and educational issues experienced by the participants in the study, none of the questions specifically addressed the topic of ethnic/racial identity. Although much attempt was made to forge a link with answers in the open-ended interviews with the participants' ethnic identity choices, few if any could be found. Thus the study was eventually limited to the quantitative investigation presented in this article.

Notes

[1] Scholars have conceptualized ethnicity as an enduring aspect of one's social identity and self concept which is derived from one's knowledge of his/her membership in a social/cultural group along with the values and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel 1981; Keefe 1992). Within the field of social science, the term 'ethnicity' is often used to distinguish within a particular racial category (e.g., between Irish and Germans within the white population in the US). While acknowledging the complex debate on the topic of race and ethnicity (see Phinney 1996), the term 'ethnicity,' as used in this article, will refer to the broad category of Americans grouped on the basis of both race and countries/cultures of origin.

[2] The question on ethnic identity was asked only in Year 1 and Year 5.

[3] Although all the participants were investigated in their ethnic changes over the same period of time, how long they have been in the country prior to the time of recruitment and the age in which they were recruited should both be considered. Based on past studies (e.g., Garcia and Lega 1979), one could argue that a 15-year old immigrant child, for example, who had lived in the US for almost five years may have a different ethnic identity development than a same-aged peer who may have lived in the US for only a few months, perhaps due to varying levels of acculturation, language proficiency, and exposure to the American society.

[4] Proposition 187 was a controversial 1994 initiative designed to prohibit illegal immigrants from receiving social services, health care, and public education in the state of California.

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Appendix A

Q: What nationality or ethnicity do you consider yourself? That is, what do you prefer to call yourself?

1. Country of Origin Identity [e.g. Mexican, Haitian, Chinese, Dominican, Salvadorian, etc]
2. Hyphenated Identity (e.g., Mexican-American, Haitian-American, etc) [All other hyphenated identities excluding African-American and Asian-American]
3. American
4. Black
5. African-American
6. Latino/a
7. Hispanic
8. Chicano/a
9. Asian-American
10. Asian
11. Double Hyphenated Identity [e.g., Black-Haitian-American]

Appendix B

Table 3
Variables Related to Ethnic/Racial Identity Labels in Year 5, Chinese Students (n=60)

Variables		CO	Hyphenated	Pan-Ethnic	*p-value*
Gender	Male	29.5%	42.9%	44.4%	0.59
	Female	70.5%	57.1%	55.6%	
Age at Year 5		16.5	15.6	16.7	0.33
Length of Residency in US		6.0	6.6	5.3	0.21
SES	Parental Education Level *				
	Low	27.9%	28.6%	55.6%	
	Medium	14.0%	14.3%	33.3%	0.15
	High	58.1%	57.1%	11.1%	
	Annual Household Income ±				
	Low	16.7%	33.3%	12.5%	
	Medium	40.5%	50.0%	50.0%	0.72
	High	42.9%	16.7%	37.5%	
Perceptions †	Americanness	1.91	2.14	2.00	0.18
	Attitudes toward US				
	Negative	20.5%	0.0%	11.1%	0.68
	Mixed	27.3%	33.3%	22.2%	
	Neutral	11.4%	0.0%	22.2%	
	Positive	40.9%	66.7%	44.4%	
	Sense of Belonging				
	Country of Origin	59.5%	57.1%	44.4%	0.08
	Both	2.4%	28.6%	22.2%	
	United States	38.1%	14.3%	33.4%	
	Discrimination				
	No	61.4%	57.1%	77.8%	0.61
	Yes	38.6%	42.9%	22.2%	

*Parental Education Level: low=less than middle school; medium=middle to high school: high=high school graduation and beyond.
± Annual Household Income: low=less than $20,000; medium=$20,000 to $40,000; high=more than $40,000
†Perceptions--See Appendix B for the questions asked and the possible options.

Table 4

Variables Related to Ethnic/Racial Identity Labels in Year 5, Haitian Students (n=43)

Variables		CO	Hyphenated	Pan-Ethnic	*p-value*
Gender	Male	31.3%	90.9%	NA	0.01
	Female	68.8%	9.1%		
Age at Year 5		15.8	15.5		0.51
Length of Residency in US		6.2	6.5		0.53
SES	Parental Education Level *				
	Low	18.8%	18.2%		
	Medium	50.0%	45.5%		0.95
	High	31.3%	36.4%		
	Annual Household Income ±				
	Low	27.6%	40.0%		
	Medium	48.3%	60.0%		0.23
	High	24.1%	0.0%		
Perceptions †	Americanness	1.50	1.70		0.55
	Attitudes toward US				
	Negative	21.9%	0.0%		0.33
	Mixed	21.9%	20.0%		
	Neutral	21.9%	20.0%		
	Positive	34.4%	60.0%		
	Sense of Belonging				
	Country of Origin	65.6%	36.4%		0.24
	Both	9.4%	18.2%		
	United States	25.0%	45.5%		
	Discrimination				
	No	62.5%	72.7%		0.72
	Yes	37.5%	27.3%		

*Parental Education Level: low=less than middle school; medium=middle to high school: high=high school graduation & beyond.

± Annual Household Income: low=less than $20,000; medium=$20,000 to $40,000; high=more than $40,000

† Perceptions--See Appendix B for the questions asked and the possible options.

Table 5

Variables Related to Ethnic/Racial Identity Labels in Year 5, Mexican Students (n=53)

Variables		CO	Pan-Ethnic	Hyphenated	*p-value*
Gender	Male	64.1%	35.7%	NA	0.07
	Female	35.9%	64.3%		
Age at Year 5		14.40	14.50		0.91
Length of Residency in US		5.7	5.5		0.54
SES	Parental Education Level *				
	Low	43.6%	50.0%		
	Medium	17.9%	21.4%		0.80
	High	38.5%	28.6%		
	Annual Household Income ±				
	Low	30.8%	30.8%		
	Medium	46.2%	38.5%		0.84
	High	23.1%	30.8%		
Perceptions †	Americanness	1.38	1.36		0.91
	Attitudes toward US				
	Negative	13.9%	14.3%		0.93
	Mixed	30.6%	21.4%		
	Neutral	11.1%	14.3%		
	Positive	44.4%	50.0%		
	Sense of Belonging				
	Country of Origin	43.6%	64.3%		0.34
	Both	20.5%	7.1%		
	United States	35.9%	28.6%		
	Discrimination				
	No	61.5%	42.9%		0.23
	Yes	38.5%	57.1%		

*Parental Education Level: low=less than middle school; medium=middle to high school: high=high school graduation and beyond.

± Annual Household Income: low=less than $20,000; medium=$20,000 to $40,000; high=more than $40,000

† Perceptions--See Appendix B for the questions asked and the possible options.

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Figures

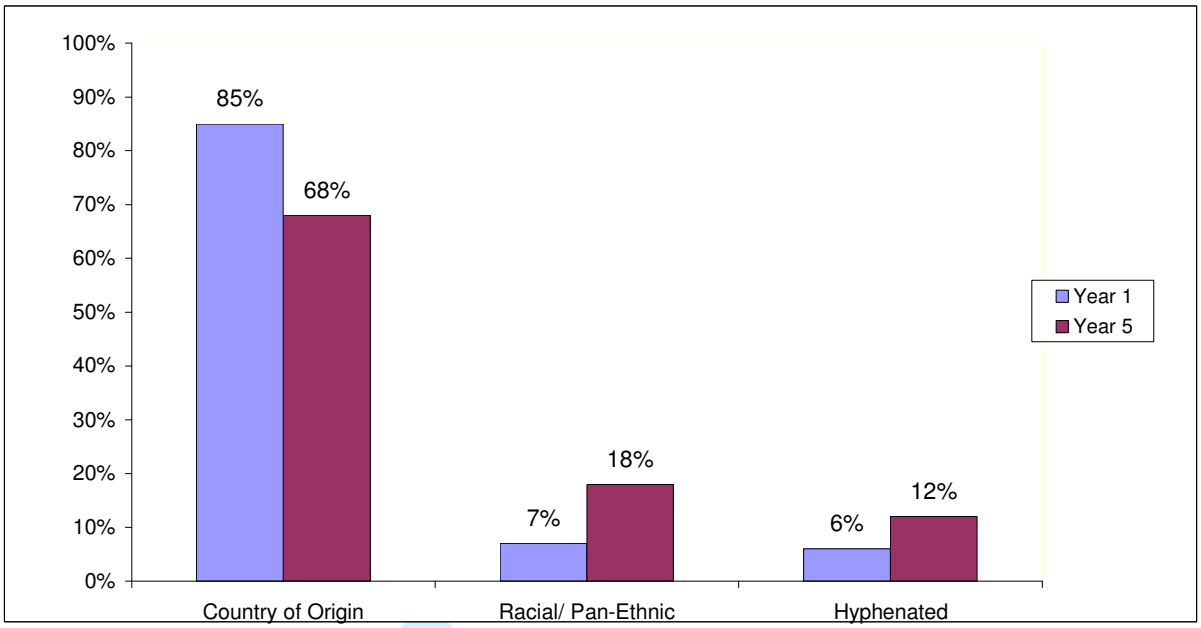

Figure 1: Ethnic Self Labels in Year 1 and Year 5. (n=192)

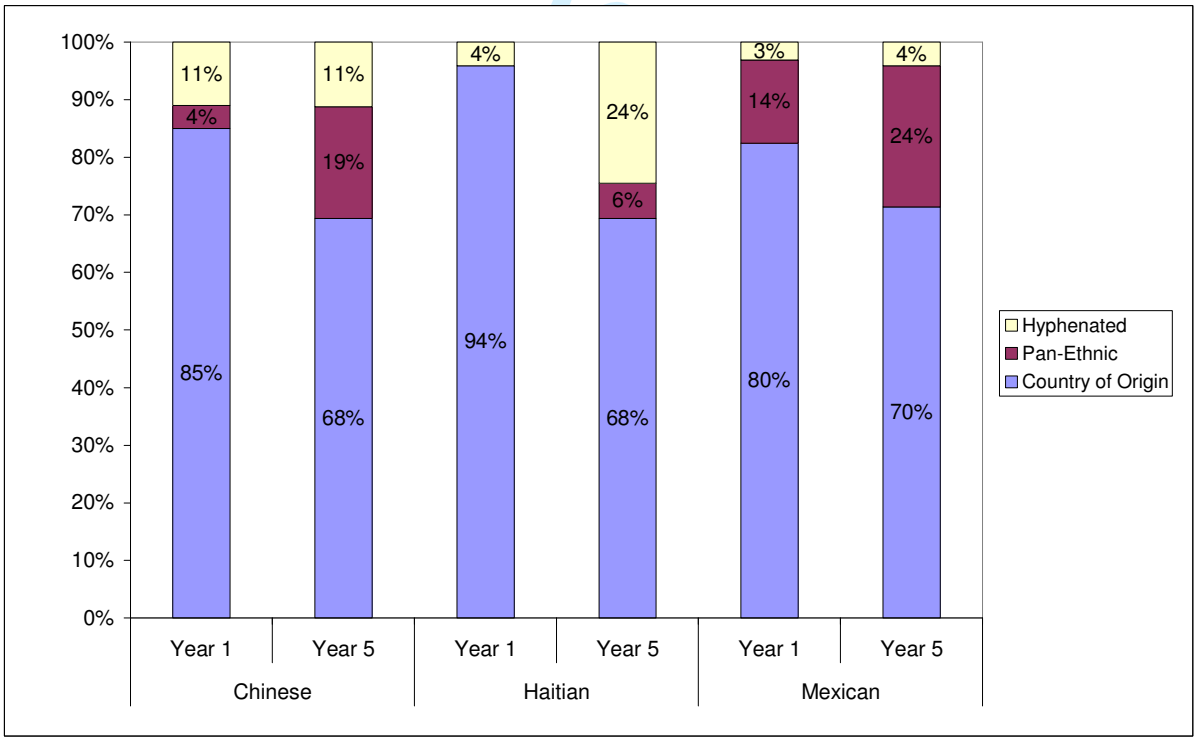

Figure 2: Ethnic Self Labels in Year 1 and Year 5 by Ethnic Groups. (n=192)

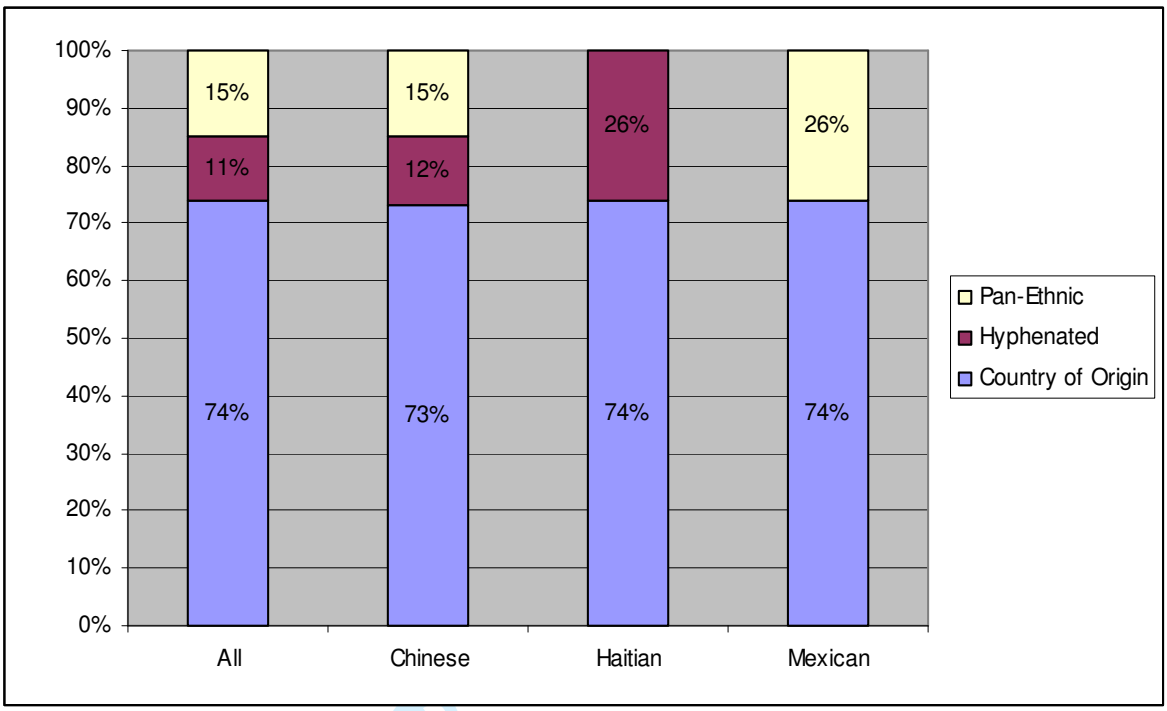

Figure 3: Patterns of Ethnic Self Labeling from Year 1 to Year 5 by Ethnic Groups. (n=156)

Tables

Table 1
Demographics of Immigrant Students in the Study, Year 5

Variables		All (n=192)	Chinese (n=72)	Haitian (n=50)	Mexican (n=70)
Gender	Male	46.4%	38.9%	46.0%	54.3%
	Female	53.6%	61.1%	54.0%	45.7%
Mean Age		15.5	16.4	15.6	14.5
Length of Residency in US		6.0	5.9	6.2	5.7
Parental Education Level *	Low	33.0%	31.0%	22.0%	42.9%
	Medium	26.2%	21.1%	46.0%	17.1%
	High	40.8%	47.9%	32.0%	40.0%
Annual Household Income ±	Low	23.6%	17.6%	26.7%	27.5%
	Medium	47.8%	44.1%	53.3%	47.8%
	High	28.6%	38.2%	20.0%	24.6%

*Parental Education Level: low=less than middle school; medium=middle to high school: high=high school graduation and beyond.

± Annual Household Income: low=less than $20,000; medium=$20,000 to $40,000; high=more than $40,000

Table 2

Key Variables Related to Ethnic/Racial Identity Labels in Year 5, All (n=156)

Variables		CO	Hyphenated	Pan-Ethnic	*p-value*
Gender	Male	41.7%	72.2%	39.1%	0.05
	Female	58.3%	27.8%	60.9%	
Age at Year 5		15.6	15.5	15.4	0.84
Length of Residency in US		5.9	6.5	5.4	0.03
SES	Parental Education Level *				
	Low	30.7%	22.2%	52.2%	
	Medium	25.4%	33.3%	26.1%	0.19
	High	43.9%	44.4%	21.7%	
	Annual Household Income ±				
	Low	24.5%	37.5%	23.8%	
	Medium	44.5%	56.3%	42.9%	0.33
	High	30.9%	6.3%	33.3%	
Perceptions †	Americanness	1.62	1.88	1.61	0.49
	Attitudes toward US				
	Negative	18.8%	0.0%	13.0%	0.51
	Mixed	26.8%	25.0%	21.7%	
	Neutral	14.3%	12.5%	17.4%	
	Positive	40.2%	62.5%	47.8%	
	Sense of Belonging				
	Country of Origin	55.8%	44.4%	56.5%	0.71
	Both	10.6%	22.2%	13.0%	
	United States	33.6%	33.4%	30.5%	
	Discrimination				
	No	61.7%	66.7%	56.5%	0.80
	Yes	38.3%	33.3%	43.5%	

*Parental Education Level: low=less than middle school; medium=middle to high school: high=high school graduation and beyond.

± Annual Household Income: low=less than $20,000; medium=$20,000 to $40,000; high=more than $40,000

† Perceptions--See Appendix B for the questions asked and the possible options.

Table 6

Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Patterns of Ethnic Self Labeling (n=156)

Predictors		β	SE β	Exp (β)
Hyphenated	Intercept	-0.867	0.949	
	Gender	-1.169*	.591	.311
	Annual Household Income	-.774~	.404	.461
	Parental Education Level	.415	.223	1.514
Pan-Ethnic	Intercept	-1.064	.875	
	Gender	.480	.516	1.616
	Annual Household Income	.118	.332	1.125
	Parental Education Level	-.595*	.296	.552
Pseudo R-square	0.125			

NB: Country-of-Origin is the reference category. P-values: ~ p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01

Gender: (0) Male; (1) Female

Parental Education Level: (1) low=less than middle school; (2) medium=middle to high school: (3) high=high school graduation and beyond.

Annual Household Income: (1) low=less than $20,000; (2) medium=$20,000 to $40,000; (3) high=more than $40,000

Table 7

Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Patterns of Ethnic Self Labeling, Chinese (n=60)

Predictors		β	SE β	Exp (β)
Hyphenated	Intercept	-1.764	1.155	
	Parental Education Level	-.022	.472	.978
Pan-Ethnic	Intercept	-.299	.857	
	Parental Education Level	-.970*	.456	.379
Pseudo R-square	0.109	df=2		

NB: Country-of-Origin is the reference category. p-values: ~ p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01

Parental Education Level: (1) low=less than middle school; (2) medium=middle to high school: (3) high=high school graduation and beyond.

Table 8

Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Patterns of Ethnic Self Labeling, Haitian (n=43)

Predictors		β	SE β	Exp (β)
Hyphenated	Intercept	.000	.647	
	Gender	-3.091**	1.116	.045
Pseudo R-square	0.383	df=1		

NB: Country-of-Origin is the reference category. p-values: ~ p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01

Gender: (0) Male; (1) Female

Table 9

Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Patterns of Ethnic Self Labeling, Mexican (n=53)

Predictors		β	SE β	Exp (β)
Pan-Ethnic	Intercept	-1.609	.490	
	Gender	1.168~	.650	3.214
Pseudo R-square	0.090	df=1		

NB: Country-of-Origin is the reference category. p-values: ~ p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.01, ±=.13

Gender: (0) Male; (1) Female